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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the nature of learning, focusing particularly on the theories of Biggs and Teffler (1989) and their research finding that the quality of learning is the result of the motivation for learning, and that this affects the learners' performance. An alternative theory of learning is offered and ideas for improving the teachers' role are considered. It is concluded that the most important point is learners' awareness of their own learning, and their own autonomy in this regard. The teacher's role is to make learners aware of their own potential based on their understanding of the learners' perspective on learning. In order for this to happen, teacher-learner dialogues need to occur as this is the most effective way for teachers to acquire a more complete understanding of the typical learners' views. Teachers should take on more than just the role of facilitators or helpers in the learners' learning, but also of participants in the learning process. Three diagrams are included. (Contains 17 references.) (KFT)

The Learning Process Model and Autonomy

ED 455 693

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Introduction

People use the word "learn" in various situations and its use has various meanings. Consequently, the question : " what actually is learning? " becomes very important.

In their book titled " Process of Learning ", Biggs & Telfer (1989) discussed learning processes, in which the quality of learning is the result of the motivation for learning, and how it affects the learner's performance. According to Biggs & Telfer, a good learning process involves being metacognitive about learning, which the learner becomes aware of his/her cognitive process and monitors him/her self through learning activities.

In the above theory, the learning quality is determined by the learner's motivational types. However, it seems to me that learners change their perspectives, perceptions and approaches through their learning experiences, which affect their motivation and outcome, and the affirmative changes occur on the condition of learners' autonomous learning.

In this paper, firstly, I shall attempt to discuss the learning model which is stated by Biggs& Telfer, and then, concerning the relationships between each of the aspects, a revised model will be presented. Then, language learning process and autonomy will be considered on the basis of the revised model. Finally, hypotheses on autonomous language learning process will be addressed in terms of getting ideas of how to improve the teachers' role.

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1. The Theory of 3P Model in Learning

Biggs & Telfer(1989) presented a learning model constructed from the learner's point of view. Called the 3P Model, it involves three stages of learning : Presage, Process, and Product. The first stage, the Presage, influences the learner before the learning processoccurs. Two factors, the personal factor and the situation factor are included. The second stage, the Process, refers to the learner's approach to the task. The last stage, the Product, which refers to cognitive and affective learning outcomes. The above aspects interactand are closely related to each other.(Figure 1)

According to this model, the surface approach is based on extrinsic motivation and is usually associated with a quantitative conception of learning. The strategy is memorising at the word/sentence level, using rehearsal-based procedures with piecemeal isolated content. On the other hand, the deep approach is based on intrinsic motivation such as curiosity or interest in the task; people who use this approach tend to have a qualitative conception of learning. Such learners are involved in a great deal of metalearning activity ; they observe themselves during learning activities and think about what they want from learning.

2. Discussion of the 3P Model

From the 3P Model, it seems that the Presage determines the result of the Process, and the Product follows accordingly. This means that different motivations lead to different kinds of learning, and the level of conception of learning affects the learner's performance. However, recent research shows that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation types are not mutually exclusive (Brown, 1981 ; Littlewood, 1984 ; Ellis, 1986 ; Ely, 1986 ; Skehan, 1991). Although the strength of each motivation type might be different, learners usually tend to be motivated both extrinsically and intrinsically. Moreover, recently, motivation has been seen as a more dynamic interplay (Dornyei, 1994 ; Ushioda, 1996). Based on the above point, an argument might be made

that learners may change their perspectives, perceptions and conceptions of learning not because of difference in motivation types, but through learning experiences. This means that learners who have more experience in learning acquire not only the content itself, but knowledge on how to learn through their learning experiences, simultaneously. Through learning experiences, it is possible for learners to learn how to control themselves both cognitively and affectively by way of systemizing their learning, encouraging themselves to accept challenges, and enjoying the process.

Consequently, learning experiences may create different learning conceptions, and affect learners'motivation, confidence or beliefs. As a result, learners' perspectives may gradually change. Then, learners may approach their process of learning with different strategies. In this way, Presage-Process-Product ; the three stages are always influenced by each other and circulate dynamically. It may also be possible to change learners' approach from quantitative learning toward qualitative learning, and hence from the surface level to a deeper level.

3. A Revised Model of Learning

Littlewood (1996) also says that knowledge,skill,motivation and confidence are closely linked in successful autonomous learning. He cites, " the more knowledge and skills the students possess, the more confident they are likely to feel when asked to perform independently ; the more confident they feel, the more they are likely to be able to mobilise their knowledge and skills in order to perform effectively ; and so on"(p428). From Littlewood's assumption, when learners improve their language skills, they will feel confident and increase their motivation in using language. Simultaneously, their ability in autonomous learning will be improved. It appears that learners' affective factors such as motivations, confidence, or beliefs are mutually related and extremely influencial for their learning process. In other words, this kind of plus cycle occurs on the assumption that learners are autonomously involved in the

learning process and make efforts to learn effectively. In contrast, if learners have any kinds of obstacles against autonomous learning, their learning may continue only at surface level. Moreover, negative effects at Product stage may influence both the Process and Presage stages. Then, the whole learning process become a vicious cycle, and finally it may be possible that they abandan the learning itself. In short, whether learners are self-aware of their autonomy or not is an important key for the direction of a learning process cycle.

Considering the above point, the relationship between the aspects of 3P model ; Presage - Process - Product can be revised. See below (Figure 2) .

4. Relationship between Autonomous Learning and Effective Learning

Dickinson(1996) considers that autonomy is necessary for effective learning. He identifies four reasons ; " 1) effective learning requires the active involvement of the learner in non-trivial ways ; 2) effective learners have the characteristics of autonomous learners ; 3) language use is necessarily an autonomous process ; 4) lack of time for the language course requires motivated students to work autonomously to reach the course objectives "(p41). Moreover, Dickinson(1996) adds that learning is " a process of theory construction, theory testing and the confirmation, amendment or rejection of the theory ".

Figure 3 shows language learning aspects related to autonomy and effective learning. Based on Figure 3, the relationship between each of the aspects will be discussed below. Firstly, the biggest goal for learning is considered to be learner autonomy, which is a learners' goal as well as an educational goal. And in particular, communicative competence is thought as a goal of language learning. In order to achive this, effective learning has to be employed. Focused on learning strategies, self-directed learning requires self-management strategies, using which learners should proceed through the learning process their flequent reflections on their progress. On the other hand, according to Wenden(1987), three key strategies of autonomous learning ; planning-monitoring-evaluating(= metacognitive strategies) are important points for effective learning. In addition to metacognitive strategies, cognitive and socila/affective strategies are also important as supports for self-directed learning. In order to improve communicative competence, communication strategies are necessary, which are also closely linked to metacognitive strategies such as compensation, or social/affective strategies. From the above points, it can be seen that various learning strategies are required to promote autonomy and communicative competence to make it possible for learners to lead their own learning more effectively. For the purpose of raising learner-awareness of their autonomous learning process, learner training, including strategy training is considered.

Whereas, task-based syllabus or communicative approaches as teaching methods are used to increase communicative competence. Language level improvement has a positive effect on motivation, and simulutaneously leads to the ability to perform autonomous learning. This means that the aims of improving language competence and autonomy should always be considered together. Thus, the relationship between autonomous learning and effective learning can be confirmed. (see Dickinson,1996).

5.Hypotheses on Autonomous Language Learning

Drown from the previous discussions and the result of the project, autonomous learning hypotheses are shown below.

(1)When learners learn autonomously, as well as improving their language level, the learners get ideas for effective learning through their learning experiences. Also, Affective attributes such as motivation or confidence will positively affect the learning process. These cognitive and affective influences are circulate dynamically. Each stage ; Presage-Process-Product is related to the the others. Learner autonomy will lead learner themselves towards effective learning. Basically, every learner has potential for autonomy in learning. And there is always the possibility of learning at a deep level.

(2)The learners connect inside/outside classroom learning, effectively. Interaction with other learners or support from teachers is important for speeding up their learning or getting ideas of how to learn. When the external environment gives affirmative feedback for learners, their learning will be stimulated towards the plus cycle.

(3)Whether a learner-led learning process is good or bad, depends on learners' belief in their ability to manage their learning and achieve their objectives. Also, an ability to be self-analytical has a positive effect on future learning.

(4)Autonomous learners selectively attend to themselves at surface/deep level depending on their needs. Autonomous learners have an internal flexibility as regards decision making. At this point,learners have a clear awareness of the objectives and needs for their learning. Autonomous learners are not given an environment, but try to make a learning environment for themselves. Therefore, autonomous learning involves not space/time freedom, but internal freedom.

(5)Autonomous learning is not a result. It is a process. When the learners cannot cope with difficulties, sometimes, they may temporarily, stop learning. If learners' internal/ex ernal constraints disrupt learners' learning, the process cycle will always be at a surface level and inefficient, or even move towards a vicious cycle. Further more, the learner may abandon the learning, altogether.

(6)In language learning, there are two goals ; both learner autonomy as a goal of education and communicative competence development as a goal of language learning should be considered. These goals are related to various strategies for effective learning. As far as the language learning process is concerned, the above two goals should be focussed on, simultaneously.

6. Applications for Learner Development and the Teachers' Role

So far, I discussed why we need to promote learner autonomy. Now, we need to think about how to promote such autonomy. Various learner training have been carried out such as : instructions for strategic learning ; Journal writing for self-reflections ; learning by doing programs, etc.

In any case, the basic point is how learners can develop their autonomy through learning experiences. The teachers'role could be how to intervane in the learners' process cycle to make it better. And learner training seems to be one such intervention.

Crabbe(1996) describes the capacity to develop autonomy as a characteristic of the human mind and a learner as a problem-solver, Learner need to develop and become aware of their own self-management techniques as regards the learning process. Proper development of learners' awareness seems to lie in the learners' active involvement in making a positive learning process cycle for themselves through continuous self-reflection and interactions. Buller & Winne(1995) cite self-regulated learning as a deliberate, judgemental adaptive process. It is conceived as a learner' unfolding cognitive engagement for making progress with iniciating of internal(self-monitoring)and external (interactions) feedback.

In short, the most important point is learners' awareness of their own learning process and their capacity for development of autonomy. In other words, learners need to be aware of their capacity to be able to make a plus cycle of the learning process.

Autonomous learning tends to be misunderstood as isolated individual learning. Instead of focusing on such forms of teaching and learning, teachers need to take into consideration how learners make thier internal/external learning environment to suit themselves by adjusing, amending, and renewing their learning process cycle. By developing such autonomy, any learner has the potential to achive the goal. The teachers' role could be to make learners aware of their own potential. To do this, at first, teachers need to make efforts to understand the learners' perspectives.

Catterall(1995) recommends teacher-learner dialogues. It is assumed that the purpose of such dialogue is not only for learner reflections, but also so the teachers can learn about learners' views through such contact.

In this respect, teachers are not just facilitators or helpers, but participants of learning in order to improve their own quality of teaching. Teachers themselves need to change their perspectives and share ideas with their learners for autonomous learning/teaching.

7.Further Implications for research work

In order to prove autonomous learning hypotheses, qualitative· quantitative data should be collected. Ushioda(1996) insists that a more introspective research approach should be conducted to explore qualitative data of affective variables. On the other hand, Mcdonough(1995) mentions that verbal reports are a useful source of hypotheses about mental processes, but not an evidence of the hypotheses. In fact, data from learners' self-reports is not sufficient data because learners' self-analysis or retrospective skills influence such data. In addition, concerning the distance between retrospection and actual experiences, the accruacy of the data in question. However, learners' views on learning processes provide the basis of research work on autonomy, which should comprise a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research and continuous longitudinal research.

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(Figure 1): 3P Model

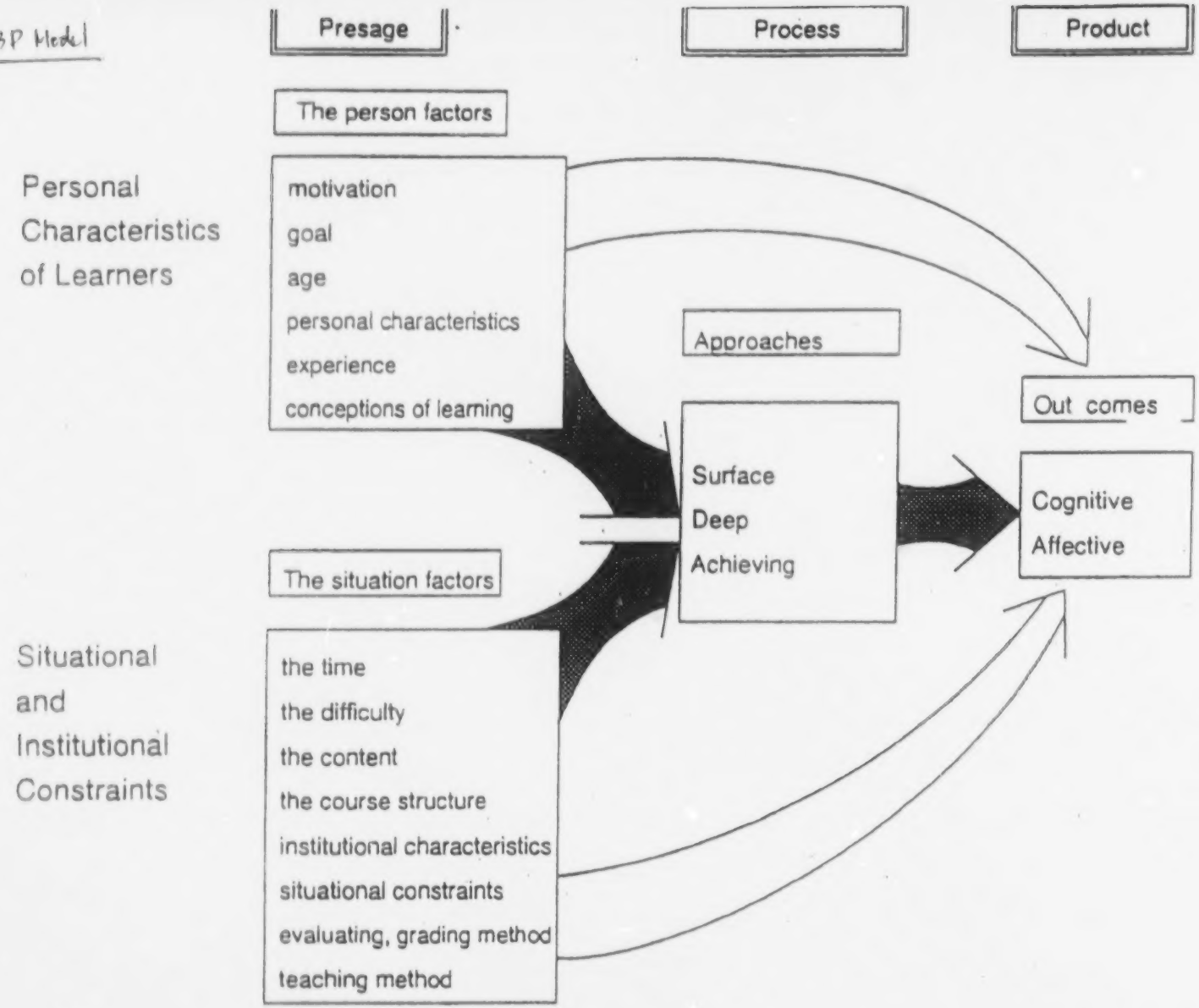
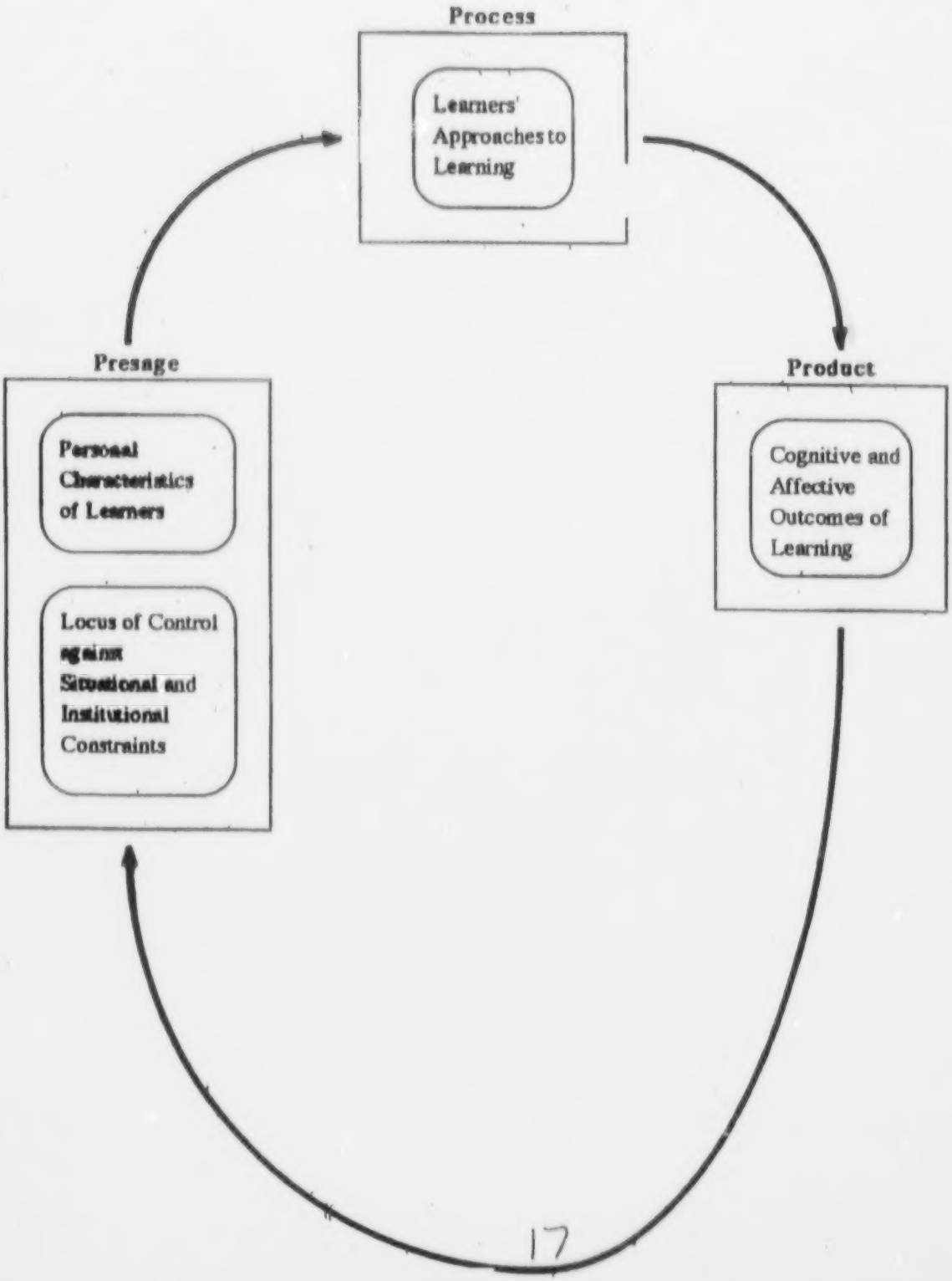


Figure 2) The Revised Model of Learning



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